



# How to Plan and Conduct a Nontraditional Careers Fair

---

One of the most successful strategies in acquainting young men and women with nontraditional careers is hosting a nontraditional careers fair. The fact is students of either gender will seldom choose to enroll in a nontraditional program; they must be recruited. By visiting employer exhibits and interacting with nontraditional role models, students and their parents/guardians will discover that there are opportunities for them to be employed in nontraditional jobs in their own community.

So, what are the steps in planning and conducting a successful nontraditional career fair?

1. Think about what makes a career fair successful. Here are some things to consider.
  - ☐ Ask employers to offer hands-on activities as part of their exhibit, such as giving students an opportunity to work with basic hand tools, or letting them try on safety gear worn on the job.
  - ☐ Encourage employers to wear the appropriate clothes for the job, such as a uniform so that students can get an idea of the work environment.
  - ☐ Make sure employment information is available for each business/industry represented at the fair. Include job descriptions, education and training requirements, work environment, salary range, and advancement opportunities.
  - ☐ Schedule the fair at a time when both students and parents can participate as it is essential that parents support their child's education, including technical training.
  - ☐ Encourage students to attend the fair with their friends when possible as peer pressure can be avoided later if their friends are informed about the benefits of pursuing a nontraditional career. In fact, they may enroll in the program.
2. Establish an advisory committee consisting of teachers, counselors, employers, students, and parents. Enlist the assistance of community organizations to help fund the activity.
  - ☐ Start meetings at least six months in advance, and establish a timeline for getting things done. Agree to dates, times, and locations of meetings. (See sample timeline.)
  - ☐ Assign committee chairs to oversee various aspects of planning.
  - ☐ Communicate, communicate, communicate!
3. Identify clear objectives for the fair. Consider the following:
  - ☐ Who is your target audience? What grade levels will be included? Will parents be invited to participate?
  - ☐ When will the career fair take place? Try to pick a date where there are no scheduling conflicts for students.
  - ☐ Where will the career fair be held? If you want students to explore, consider holding it at a community or technical college with facilities both indoors and outdoors for hands-on activities.

---

## How to Plan and Conduct a Nontraditional Careers Fair

- ☐ Which nontraditional careers will be included? Make sure employment opportunities exist with local and area employers.
  - ☐ What activities will be included? (Demonstrations, skill practice, interactive games, etc.)
  - ☐ Do you have a budget or will co-sponsors be enlisted to help with the costs associated with conducting a career fair?
    - Postage for invitations to employers and parents
    - Name tags
    - Signs directing participants to fair and exhibits and exhibitor signs
    - Printing flyers and programs for activity
    - Door prizes (optional)
    - Refreshments (optional)
    - Transportation for students if held off campus
4. Form committees, such as hospitality, site coordination, exhibit coordination, promotion, printing, door prize, and evaluation.
  5. Identify nontraditional role models from business and industry. Contact Chamber of Commerce and other civic groups in community, local professional associations, union representatives, and program instructors for a list of their advisory committee members. Think about what are nontraditional careers.
  6. Promote the nontraditional careers fair, using posters, flyers, public service announcements, newspaper articles in school and community papers, and by talking with students and encouraging them to attend.
  7. Provide students with an evaluation form to gather input on what worked and what did not work.
  8. Send out thank you letters and a participant evaluation form to gather input from exhibitors and to determine if they are willing to participate next year.
  9. Monitor student enrollment to determine if more young men and women are enrolling in nontraditional programs and choosing nontraditional career paths.

## How to Plan and Conduct a Nontraditional Careers Fair

### Suggested Time Line

Date	Task	Committee Chair
6 months prior	Establish the advisory committee	Coordinator
	Set meeting dates	
	Form committees	
	Set clear objectives	
	Set date, time, location of event	
	Develop budget	
5 months prior	Identify nontraditional role models from business and industry and make initial contacts by phone Inquire about co-sponsors for event Confirm location and make appropriate arrangements	Committee
4 months prior	Follow up with business and industry contacts by mail to secure participation	Coordinator
3 months prior	Review list of business/industry participants Create promotional items Order supplies	Committee Promotions
2 months prior	Arrange for refreshments Provide in-service on fair promotion	Hospitality Promotion
1 month prior	Promote nontraditional career fair Solicit door prizes	Promotion Door Prize
3 weeks prior	Finalize fair program Assign exhibit space and prepare visitor guide Prepare evaluation forms for distribution at fair/mail	Promotion Coordinator
2 weeks prior	Print program Begin PSAs, student presentations, etc.	Promotion
1 week prior	Prepare articles for inclusion in school and community newspaper Make final arrangements/collect resources	Promotion Committee
2 weeks after	Send thank you letters with evaluations to business and industry representatives and co-sponsors	Committee
1 month after	Conduct committee meeting to share feedback from students, business/industry, and co-sponsors, and to note areas for improvement	Committee
	Thank committee members for their great efforts	Coordinator

---

## How to Plan and Conduct a Nontraditional Careers Fair

### Sample Letter of Invitation

School Logo, Information

Date

Name

Address

Dear Mr./Ms.:

The (Name Your Own School District) is sponsoring a Nontraditional Careers Fair for our high school students on (day, month, date, and time). The purpose of this activity is to provide students with the opportunity to:

- Meet and interact with nontraditional role models
- Experience various occupations through hands-on activities
- Learn about the work environment, the education and training needed for the job, and career opportunities available with community and area employers.

Your company has been identified by our planning committee as one we would like to invite to participate in our fair, based on your outstanding reputation and your support of education in our community. Please consider joining us to help make our nontraditional career fair a great success. Your designated representatives will be asked to spend (time designated) interacting with students and answering questions regarding job responsibilities and skills, pay, and working conditions. To help maintain student interest, we would also like presenters to include some type of hands-on activity such as working with tools, trying on safety gear, sitting in/on a piece of equipment, etc. Any handouts that would be suitable for the students and/or their parents about the occupations would be appreciated.

If you are interested in participating in this worthwhile activity, please return the participant form in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. Should you have any questions, please contact (committee chair or coordinator) at (phone number). I am available from (times).

We hope that you will take advantage of this opportunity to showcase your company and we look forward to working with you. Thank you for your continued support of our educational programs at (name of school).

Cordially,

(Coordinator, Chair)

Enclosure: participant form

**Sample Participant Response Form**

*Name of School*  
**Nontraditional Careers Fair  
Participant Response Form**

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Names of Role Models: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Hands-on Activity: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Yes, we will participate in the Nontraditional Careers Fair.

\_\_\_\_ No, we are unable to participate this year; contact us again next year.